

**PART 15d—NONDISCRIMINATION  
IN PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES  
CONDUCTED BY THE UNITED  
STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

Sec.

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**§ 15d.1 Purpose.**

The purpose of this part is to set forth the nondiscrimination policy of the United States Department of Agriculture in programs or activities conducted by the Department, including such programs and activities in which the Department or any agency thereof makes available any benefit directly to persons under such programs and activities.

**§ 15d.2 Definitions.**

For the purpose of this part, the following definitions apply:

*Agency* means a major organizational unit of the Department with delegated authority to deliver programs, activities, benefits, and services. Heads of Agencies receive their delegated authority as prescribed in 7 CFR part 2.

*Agency Head Assessment* means the annual Agency Civil Rights Performance Plan and Accomplishment Report conducted by the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (OASCR). It is an evaluation tool used by OASCR to assess USDA Agency Heads and Staff Office Directors on their civil rights activities and accomplishments to ensure accountability throughout the Department on these issues.

*Alternative Dispute Resolution* or *ADR* means any number of conflict resolution procedures in which parties agree to use a third-party neutral to resolve complaints or issues in controversy. ADR methods include, but are not limited to, mediation, facilitation, fact finding, arbitration, use of ombuds, or any combination thereof.

*Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights* or *ASCR* means the civil rights officer for USDA responsible for the performance and oversight of all civil rights functions within USDA, and who retains the authority to delegate civil rights functions to heads of USDA agencies and offices. The ASCR is also responsible for evaluating agency heads on their performance of civil rights functions.

*Complaint* means a written statement that contains the complainant's name and address and describes an agency's alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the ASCR of the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The statement must be signed by the complainant(s) or someone authorized to sign on behalf of the complainant(s). To accommodate the needs of people with disabilities, special needs, or who have Limited English Proficiency, a complaint may be in an alternative format.

*Compliance report* means a written review of an agency's compliance with civil rights requirements, to be prepared by OASCR and to identify each finding of non-compliance or other civil rights related issue. The review is conducted at the discretion of OASCR or if there has been a formal finding of non-compliance.

*Conducted Programs and Activities* means the program services, benefits or resources delivered directly to the public by USDA.

*Days* mean calendar days, not business days.

*Department* (used interchangeably with USDA) means the Department of Agriculture and includes each of its operating agencies and other organizational units.

*Discrimination* means unlawful treatment or denial of benefits, services, rights or privileges to a person or persons because of their race, color, national origin, religion, sex, sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, sexual orientation, familial status, parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or gender identity.

*Secretary* means the Secretary of Agriculture or any officer or employee of the Department whom the Secretary has heretofore delegated, or whom the